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## DOCUMENTS

### *1. Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, 1783.*

THE following letter of Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark of Kentucky, the well-known conqueror of the Illinois country in the Revolution, is from the Draper Collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 52 Clark MSS., 93. I am indebted to Secretary Reuben G. Thwaites for permission to use it. The significance of the letter becomes increased when it is recalled that William, the brother of George Rogers Clark, was the famous companion of Lewis in the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-1806.

The publication in 1783 of Ledyard's account of Captain Cook's voyage, which aroused interest in Pacific trade, and the organization of the British Northwest Company in that year, may have influenced Jefferson in addressing George Rogers Clark. At Paris, in 1786, Jefferson was interested in Ledyard's scheme for engaging a wealthy French mercantile company, the house of Le Coulteux, in the fur-trade of the Pacific coast, and he secured from this house a promise that they would consider the advantages of Alexandria, on the Potomac, for their depot of supply.<sup>1</sup> Jefferson's interest in canals connecting the Potomac and the Ohio was partly due to this project. After the failure of Ledyard's Parisian plans, Jefferson proposed to him to cross Russia to Kamchatka, take ship to Nootka Sound, and thence return to the United States by way of the Missouri.<sup>2</sup> But this failed through Russian opposition.

In 1792 Jefferson proposed to the American Philosophical Society to send an explorer by way of the Missouri to the Pacific. He selected Lewis as leader, with André Michaux (the botanist whose connections with George Rogers Clark and Genet are noted in the article on Genet in this number of the REVIEW), as his companion. Jefferson made out instructions for Michaux in January, 1793. But the plans of Genet prevented this project; and the fears of Jefferson lest England gain priority in this trans-continental ex-

<sup>1</sup>Jefferson, *Writings*, IV. 326 *et passim*.

<sup>2</sup>Jefferson, *Memoir of Meriwether Lewis*, in Coues, *History of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, I. xviii.

pedition were partly verified when Alexander Mackenzie crossed through Canada in 1793 to the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> In the fall of 1794 Carondelet, governor of Louisiana, relates that he has offered a reward to a St. Louis company of explorers, if they should reach the Pacific and bring back news of the Russian settlements.<sup>2</sup>

The outcome of these various attempts of Jefferson in the Lewis and Clark expedition is well known. William Clark gave to George Rogers Clark an early account of his success.

FREDERICK J. TURNER.

Annapolis Dec. 4. 1783.

Dear Sir

I received here about a week ago your obliging letter of Oct. 12. 1783. with the shells and seeds for which I return you many thanks. you are also so kind as to keep alive the hope of getting for me as many of the different species of bones, teeth and tusks of the Mammoth as can now be found. this will be most acceptable, Pittsburg and Philadelphia or Winchester will be the surest channel of conveyance. I find they have subscribed a very large sum of money in England for exploring the country from the Missisipi to California. they pretend it is only to promote knolege. I am afraid they have thoughts of colonising into that quarter. some of us have been talking here in a feeble way of making the attempt to search that country. but I doubt whether we have enough of that kind of spirit to raise the money. how would you like to lead such a party? tho I am afraid our prospect is not worth asking the question. the definitive treaty of peace is at length arrived. it is not altered from the preliminaries. the cession of the territory West of Ohio to the United states has been at length accepted by Congress, with some small alterations of the conditions. we are in daily expectation of receiving it with the final approbation of Virginia. Congress have been lately agitated by questions where they should fix their residence. they first resolved on Trentown. the Southern states however contrived to get a vote that they would give half their time to Georgetown at the Falls of Patowmac. still we consider the matter as undecided between the Delaware and Patowmac. we urge the latter as the only point of union which can cement us to our Western friends when they shall be formed into separate states. I shall always be happy to hear from you and am with very particular esteem,  
D<sup>r</sup>. Sir

Your friend and humble servt

TH. JEFFERSON

[Addressed : Gen<sup>l</sup>. George Rogers Clarke.]

<sup>1</sup> Mackenzie, *Voyages through America*.

<sup>2</sup> AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW, II. 476.